

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION



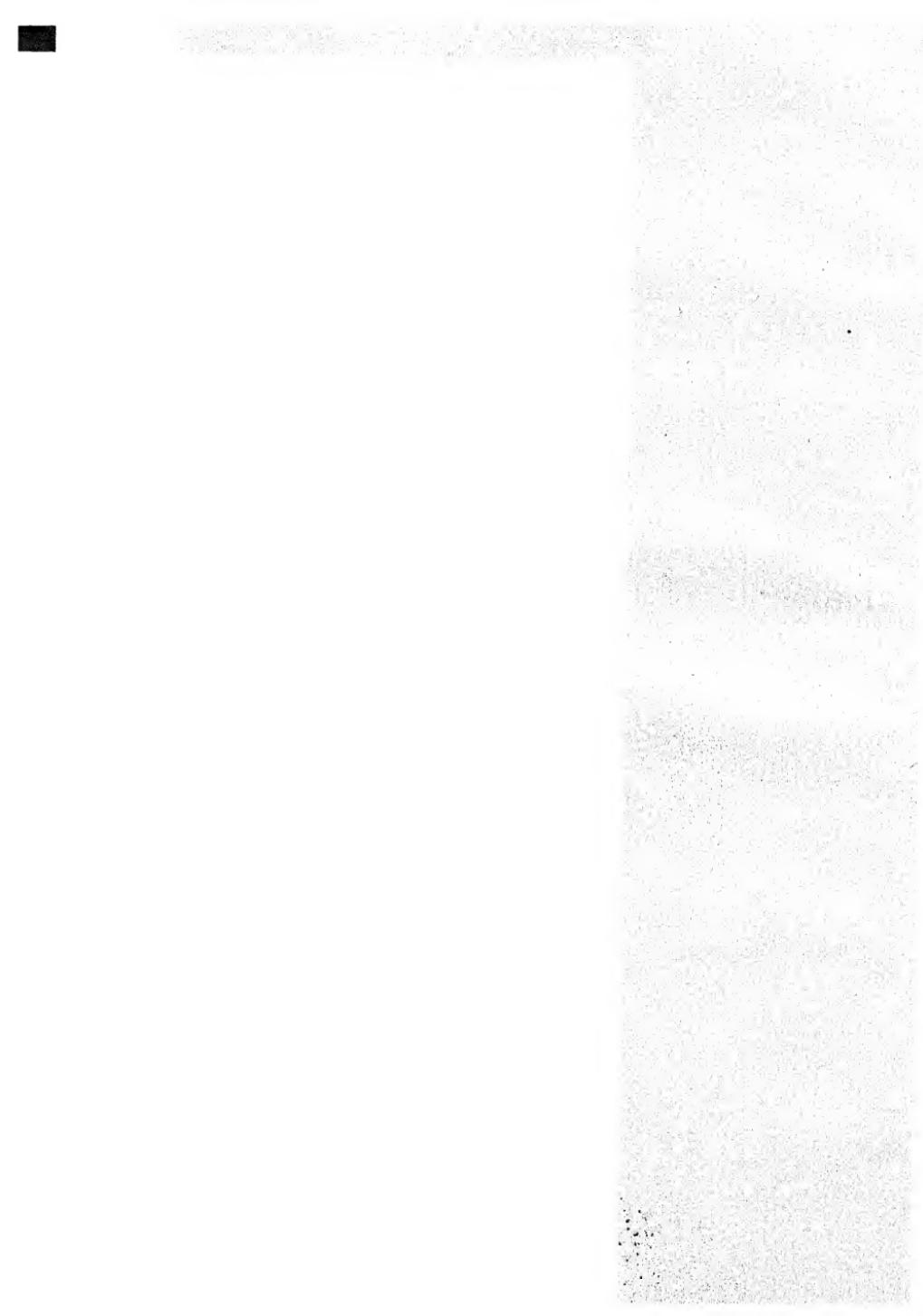
Lecture delivered at the Indian Institute of
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on April 3, 1957

by

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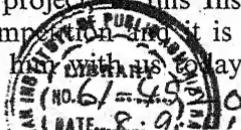
(*Text of a Lecture delivered by Dr. Hugh Keenleyside, on Wednesday, the 3rd April, 1957.*)

Chairman (Shri D.L. Mazumdar) :

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is very fortunate for the Institute to have Dr. Hugh Keenleyside here this evening for a talk on "Technical Assistance in Public Administration". For those of you who may not be acquainted with the many-sided activities of Dr. Keenleyside, I would say a few words to introduce him. He has served in the Department of External Affairs of his country in many important and responsible administrative positions for a number of years. He was the Deputy Minister of Resources and Development and the Commissioner of North-West Territories, Canada, before he joined the United Nations Technical Mission about six years ago. His first assignment in the Mission, I believe, was in Bolivia ; and since then he has seen a great deal of the world and the United Nations in different capacities. He is at present, as you already know, the Director-General of the U.N. Technical Assistance Administration.

There is another aspect of Dr. Keenleyside's career which is of particular interest to us in the Indian Institute of Public Administration. He was the recipient of the Haldane Prize for the best essay on Public Administration in 1954. We have a project in this Institute, of organising a similar essay competition and it is a matter of great pleasure that we have him with us today.



Dr. Hugh Keenleyside :

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen :

It is a pleasure to have an opportunity of meeting with the members of this new brotherhood of Public Administration. For some time I have been a member of an almost equally new and similar group in Canada and a member of the Royal Institute of Public Administration in the U.K. I have also been associated with the International Institute of Administrative Sciences, which is the international forum to bring together various national organisations dealing with public administration. There is always a satisfaction in having an opportunity to talk with those who are seriously interested in administrative problems whether they are international or of a single country. I must congratulate you on the interest that you seem to have in the subject of today's lecture. It is most gratifying that so many people have come here on a warm afternoon of a holiday. I do not think they would do that in many countries under similar circumstances.

One of the earliest and simplest interpretations of what is needed for good administrative practice was put forward by Mencius 2500 years ago. He thought that all that was necessary was to ensure that the administration was in the hands of the "best families". This principle has been applied in actual practice in a good many countries throughout history. In the early days in the United States, shortly after the revolution, Thomas Jefferson argued that "the whole of Government consists in the art of being honest". While this aphorism rightly laid stress on one of the important aspects of administration, it is obviously not the only aspect which matters. There are many instances, in history, of states which have been honestly administered by the "best families" but which have also been badly administered. On the other hand, it is no less true that a wider practice of the art of honesty in public administration would produce rather radical changes in the administration of some states. Perhaps the most persistent idea in the modern history of

political attitudes towards administration was also given currently by Jefferson when he said that "that government is best that governs least". In other words, keep the Government out of social affairs, keep the government out of private activities, let the people run their own affairs, and let the Government take care only of those things that are essential for national control and everything will go well. The idea of such a negative and limited role for Government in the social and economic fields did persist for a very long time and it can, in fact, be found in some places even today.

But in recent years there has been a great change in the general attitude towards Government and the responsibilities and practices of Government. There has been an enormous increase in the scale and in the variety of the activities of the Government. In most states the people now expect of the Government many new services calculated to advance their material well-being. Sometimes one comes across rather amusing reflections on how this change has taken place and how it has affected the people concerned with it. Lord Rosebery, a former Prime Minister of Great Britain, who wrote a long and rather interesting essay on the wealth and the power of the Government, found that in Britain, by the 1890's, the powers of Government had increased so much that tyranny was almost inevitable if the trend continued any longer. It was becoming impossible for the public service to carry on efficiently the tasks that were being increasingly entrusted to it. And that was written about 1900 !

The changes that have taken place during the last 50 or 60 years are of fantastic dimensions. From what I have seen and read there is, particularly in the more advanced countries, but in other countries as well, a strong and growing demand for Governments to provide something approximating personal security from "the cradle to the grave". If anything of that sort is to be secured, of course, it means that Government is going to play a greater role in the regulation and control of the actions of individuals and social groups than has been the case at any time in the past in the history of the democratic states.

These facts add greatly to the problems of technical assistance in public administration towards the solution of which the United Nations has been asked to contribute in recent years. The aid given by the U.N. does not involve interference with, or the actual taking over or operation of, any of the activities of the under-developed or war-devastated countries. The UNTAA does not approach a country and say "your social progress is poor", "your general administration is bad", "your economic administration is weak" and so forth. It operates on the basis of requests from national Governments and among those most frequently received are requests for assistance in meeting administrative problems. These administrative problems arise very largely from the fact that the people, even in the least materially developed countries in the world, are now beginning to demand the kind of services, and of the order of magnitude, provided in the advanced welfare states. This growing desire to improve their social conditions, and the unwillingness of the people everywhere to continue to exist in a condition of misery, are the result of a cumulative process which has been at work throughout history but which has been greatly accelerated by the advent of democracy. It had spread widely with the growth and development of democratic ideas and institutions. The people, who previously accepted their present state of life as the result of God's will, have now come to realise that it is not necessary for them to suffer and that they can lead a better life. But the only way in which their living standards can be improved, is for their Governments to undertake new functions and responsibilities of the kind assumed under the recent social codes in many States throughout the world.

In Bolivia, for example, they have one of the best "social security codes" to be found anywhere in the world. From reading the law one would be tempted to draw the conclusion that the people of Bolivia are being well taken care of, are being given every opportunity to utilise their faculties to the full, and that their Government is doing everything that any governmental organisation could do to

give to the people the opportunities that they need and ask for. The new code was enacted in deference to the wishes of the people for the so-called good things of life. The code is a significant sign-post pointing the way for Bolivia's economic and social progress. But it will require much greater financial and administrative resources than Bolivia today possesses to give full effect to the code.

Similar ideas, demands and problems are now to be found in almost every country in the world. The nations and the people who occupy a more privileged position economically and socially have a real responsibility for guiding and assisting those who are less privileged.

The assistance which is now organised and canalised through the UNTAA partakes of the nature of missionary work. The experts whom the U.N. sends out are missionaries of ideas and techniques. The suggestions put forward by these missionaries in the many countries to which they go gradually become widely known and begin to permeate the whole nation.

To put the problem of technical assistance in the field of public administration in simple terms, the complexity of modern civilisation has, in recent times changed the whole order of social activity—its nature, scale, speed and pattern. All this has taken place with the assistance and active collaboration of the Governments, and it has, in turn, further resulted in increased demands on them. Thus, everywhere in the world, Governments are coming to recognize that efficient administrative machinery is one of the most important requirements that are being demanded of them by their people. It is quite apparent that in a modern state there can be no real progress in social and economic affairs if the Government of that state, through inexperience, inefficiency or corruption or for some other reasons, is unable so to organize society that the entrepreneurs in business and industry and the welfare workers and agencies in the social field—both public and private—can carry on their activities smoothly and efficiently. But in providing administrative assistance to a government, the

suggestion that the administration could be better run by making suitable improvements in methods and organisation sometimes comes up against a good deal of resistance. There is here an interesting problem in human relations.

I think that most people would agree that there is nothing reprehensible, nothing to be ashamed of, in not knowing too much about some natural science. I myself do not know much about chemistry and I do not feel particularly ashamed of it. Similarly, many people feel that there is no cause for reproach in their not knowing how to run a geological survey or how to work as an engineer. In all the natural sciences they willingly accept the accusation of ignorance.

But when you come to social sciences the situation is entirely different. If you suggest to a person that he does not know the answers in the social sciences, he takes it as a personal insult. If you tell him that his knowledge and grasp of political organization and practice is poor and inadequate and that he should not be allowed to speak with authority on political matters, or that his knowledge of human psychology is insufficient to enable him to judge his neighbours, he is likely to become angry. The same seems to be true in public administration. This is a field in which everybody who works in the Government in some responsible position thinks that he knows all the answers. And yet the fact remains that of all the weaknesses of the under-developed states administrative inefficiency is the most prevalent. It is true that the economics of these under-developed states are weak; it is true that their social programmes are unsatisfactory and that many of their people lead miserable lives; but it is equally true that their Governments do not function with the efficiency that could, and should be, expected of them.

Coming back to the illustration I started with, when a U.N. expert mission went to Bolivia in 1950, it found that the people of the country were among the most charming in the world. All of us who were members of the Mission have a very real and continuing affection for the people of

Bolivia. They could not have been more simple, more pleasant, more agreeable or more sincere. But the economy of that country even after 125 years of independence, was such that 85% of the people were living in miserable circumstances. About 80% of them could neither read nor write. For over fifty years the Government had not had the experience of a President staying in office throughout the whole of his term of four years. When the U.N. mission arrived, it found that there had been seven Ministers of Finance within the preceding two years, and there had been twenty Ministers of Labour between 1940 and 1950. Most of the civil servants, including superior civil servants, had been in the Government service for less than four years. How could one expect the administration to be run properly with that kind of political instability. When we came to prepare our report, we discussed all possible aspects of the various problems with the Government, worked out with their co-operation the details of the different steps to be taken in the various fields, and dovetailed the various recommendations together. In the end, we thus arrived at a cohesive body of suggestions which had been drawn up with the understanding and agreement of the Government.

But it was clear to all of us that the Government as it was then operating would not be able to do much about implementing the recommendations. We therefore felt that we must also work out with the Government plans which would enable it by improved administrative practices to carry out in due course the other proposals. We accordingly proposed that the Bolivian Government should enter into an agreement with the United Nations by which the latter would recruit a group of competent and experienced administrators from many different fields and from different parts of the world, bring them to Bolivia at the expense of the U.N., and hand them over to the Bolivian Government who would appoint these people as their own civil servants. They were to pay them the same salaries as their national civil servants generally received. The U.N. were to provide the Bolivian Government with the necessary foreign exchange to meet the additional cost that would be involved. The

scheme was eventually put into effect on a limited scale and it is still in operation. With some variations it is being used also in at least half a dozen other countries placed in a somewhat similar situation.

The UNTAA therefore in its discussions with national Governments tries to make them realize that if they find it difficult to meet all the requirements of a modern administration with their limited administrative personnel and experience, they can obtain the assistance of foreign experts, of course on a temporary basis. The expert personnel will help strengthen their administrative machine and thus enable it to cope with the volume and a variety of governmental tasks. They will also assist in the training of national civil servants so that the services of foreign experts may be dispensed with more quickly. Training facilities can also be obtained in more advanced foreign countries under the various schemes of U.N. fellowships and scholarships. The facilities so made available have been found very useful in enlarging and improving the administrative knowledge of national civil servants and in sharpening and deepening their administrative insights.

II

That much about the nature and usefulness of technical assistance in public administration. Now I turn to how these U.N. technical assistance activities are organised and operated. We have, over the last six years, received a steadily rising number of requests for aid in public administration from all parts of the world. This increase has taken place not only in regard to requests from Asian countries but also from those of Europe; it has not taken place any more rapidly in Africa than it had in South America.

As you already know, the UNTAA operates in three main fields: Economic Development, Social Welfare and Public Administration. The number of requests for technical assistance in the field of Economic Development has been going up steadily as has also the incidence of

requests in Social Welfare; but requests in respect of Public Administration have multiplied much more rapidly than either of the others. The importance of this field has become all the more obvious as we have gained more experience in the whole area of technical assistance. This was publicly recognized at the last meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations when the amount of money that was previously available for public administration under the "regular" programme of technical assistance was doubled. Though the actual amount approved of at that session (October 1956) was modest, *i.e.*, \$300,000, it was symbolic of the recognition of the new and increasingly important activity of the United Nations in the field of public administration.

The forms in which technical assistance in public administration is generally given are the same as in other fields, *i.e.*, (1) technical literature and documentations, (2) fellowships and scholarships, (3) expert advice, and (4) training centres.

In the handling of fellowships, we have learnt a good deal by trial and error. When we began, we took fellows and scholars from the least developed countries and placed them in the most highly developed countries. We would take a junior or an intermediate civil servant from some country of small size and place him in Washington or London. We forgot that the procedures followed in the latter places were mostly large, complex and illsuited to the requirements of smaller countries. We now try to send trainees to places where the Governmental structure is relatively somewhat but not too much greater in magnitude nor very much more complex than that of the fellow's home country.

We have set up training institutes in some countries at the request of their national Governments. Such Institutes have been established in Turkey, Egypt, Costa Rica and Brazil. If requested to do so, we will also set up regional training centres to assist in the training of civil servants in advanced administrative methods and practices, for a group of countries within a given region.

And finally there is the most common and important of all the methods of aid, that of providing individual experts or groups of experts at the request of the Governments to advise and work with the national civil servants and to help them in resolving some of the administrative difficulties with which they are faced.

These are some of the ways in which effective technical assistance is being rendered. Financially, its magnitude runs somewhere in the neighbourhood of a million and a half dollars a year. The amount spent is most insignificant in relation to the size of the needs.

QUESTIONS

Q. *The administrative problems of the under-developed countries can hardly be solved by outside experts from developed countries, who have little knowledge of local circumstances. What assistance has the UNTAA been rendering to develop the local resources and talents in the field of public administration ?*

Ans. First of all, we have never sent out an expert except at the request of the national Government concerned; and our experience has been that, of the experts sent out, at least three-quarters were asked to return or to have had their terms extended. The UNTAA therefore assumes that the national Governments are getting some benefit from expert-aid. I agree with the questioner that experts from highly developed countries should not be sent to under-developed countries to advise without first studying in detail the particular circumstances and traditions of that country. All the experts, that we have sent out, spend a good deal of their time in studying the particular problems of the receiving country. The only other important means of direct assistance to the Governments is the provision of opportunities for individual civil servants to go abroad to study and acquire the knowledge of advanced techniques of administration.

Q. *Have you found it necessary or advantageous to give the experts some kind of orientation before they go out ?*

Ans. We have, on a number of occasions, given consideration to the possibility of setting up an extended orientation course. There have already been two or three studies carried out on this subject, particularly in connection with locating such orientation courses at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. We have, in the end, come to the conclusion that the best that could be done with the limited resources that are available is to provide a "briefing" session at the headquarters of the organisation that sends out the expert. This briefing session for the U.N. experts is given at New York or Geneva. At such a session the expert is given an outline of the work he is expected to do. He is then put in touch with the nationals of the country to which he is going, employed at the United Nations Headquarters. Some nationals of almost every country are on the staff of the international organisations. For instance, at the United Nations Headquarters personnel come from 67 different nations. Thus, we always find some persons from the country to which the expert is going to talk to him and give him advice. We also provide him with copies of all the relative correspondence with the Government and put him in touch with the Delegation of the country at the Headquarters. Almost every country has a permanent Delegation at the United Nations Headquarters and this provides another opportunity for effective "briefing".

Q. *You have mentioned two kinds of assistance : (1) sending out experts, and (2) sending out local officials to a foreign country for advanced study and training. Do you consider desirable or feasible to put the two kinds of people together so that both of them may be more effective in the long run ?*

Ans. This is a really important question. It is a matter that has been of great concern to us for a long time. We have been trying to relate the fellowship programme increasingly to expert aid. The device adopted for the

purpose has been to obtain the advice of the experts already sent to a country on the suitability and desirability of training the civil servants of that country abroad, on the nature, duration and place of training, and the type of civil servants to be selected. The training received by the national civil servants enables them on their return, to formulate additional projects and to screen the existing schemes of expert assistance. Thus, both types of assistance are being integrated and used in combination to improve administrative methods and techniques and to extend their scope of application.

Q. Under what conditions and in what fields is the transplantation of administrative techniques easier, and where is it more difficult ? What has been your experience in this matter ?

Ans. It is really a fundamental question and I am myself not at all sure if I can furnish a satisfactory answer to it. I might venture the suggestion that there has been, comparatively, a greater degree of success in the case of projects concerning the organisation and administration of fiscal policy. I believe that the least success has probably been in the field of 'personnel', particularly in respect of the organisation and administration of the civil service commissions because that is the hardest of all nuts to crack.

Q. Does the U.N. operate any scheme of follow-up on the fellows and scholars trained abroad under its auspices ? Is such follow-up effective ?

Ans. The UNTAA keeps in regular touch with a fellow during the period of his fellowship. He has to submit to it monthly or bi-monthly progress reports. The UNTAA also asks the agency with which he is placed, or the academic institution concerned, to send periodic reports about the progress of his study. As regards follow-up after the return of the trainee to his own country, such reports are called for from him through his national government to find out the extent to which he is making use of the knowledge and experience acquired by him during his

training abroad. The U.N. Resident Representative in the country concerned is also asked to report whether the person concerned has since been employed in a useful manner or otherwise. The UNTAA is still experimenting with these arrangements. A new scheme has recently been planned on an experimental basis in the north western part of Canada and in the United States under which an attempt is to be made to develop a sort of tutorial relationships between the representatives of the United Nations and the universities which are to be centres of regional activities for training of foreign scholars and fellows. I am very hopeful that this scheme will meet with a large measure of success. The entire question presents a real problem, and I do not think any of the agencies are really satisfied with what they have so far done to solve it.

Q. Is there any provision in regard to the exact status of a U.N. expert with the national Government to which he is accredited ? Is such a person inevitably employed in a purely advisory capacity or does he also get into operational activities if he stays long enough ?

Ans. The normal practice is that the status of the expert will be one of an advisory capacity, but in a number of instances operational jobs as well are being carried out.

Q. It is generally thought that the objectives of public administration and the techniques followed largely depend upon the political complexion of the country concerned. For example, it is often held that the administrative techniques followed in the Communist countries are quite different from the techniques in use in the countries with a democratic set-up. In such circumstances, how can you lay down generalisations in regard to expert advice in the field of public administration ?

Ans. The U.N. Technical Assistance Administration has been charged, by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, with the responsibility of providing technical assistance to the countries which ask for it. Its officers come together in a meeting and consider the requests

from various national governments and the final decisions are based on their assessment of the overall position. It is for the representatives of national governments, meeting in the Economic and Social Council or in the General Assembly, to decide whether the civil servants of the UNTAA have done their job satisfactorily or not. The latter would not normally think of sending a communist expert in public administration to countries with a different political complexion.

Q. *How are the policy decisions in regard to the provision of technical assistance taken ?*

Ans. Decisions are arrived at in the UNTAA as follows :

When a request for assistance is received, it is circulated to all branches in the whole Secretariat which have any interest in that request. Normally that means the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. All requests for assistance in the field of Public administration also go to the Public Administration Division of the T.A.A. The various branches, to which a request has been circulated for advice, make up their mind as to what should be done about it. They present their recommendations to a meeting which is held once a week and consists of the Director-General, the Deputy Director-General and the Director of the Programme Division together with senior representatives of the substantive Departments of the TAA. A note, indicating the different views of the people who have been consulted, is circulated well in advance of the meeting. Most of the decisions are taken at this meeting. There have been a few instances in which the matter was deemed to be of sufficient importance to go up to the Secretary-General, but that has happened not more than half a dozen times.

The Chairman (Shri D.L. Mazumdar):

We have had a number of questions and we are grateful to Dr. Keenleyside for patiently answering them. His

was an important subject; there are many facets to it. Obviously it was not possible for him, within the limited time at his disposal, to deal with more than one or two important aspects of it, which he has done admirably well.

So far as India is concerned, *Dr. Keenleyside* is probably aware that she is slightly differently placed from countries like Bolivia. Nevertheless, we have a very real interest in the U.N. scheme of Technical Assistance in the field of Public Administration. Although we can claim to have a reasonably well-established administrative organization, there are yet some aspects of administration in which we have either already received, or can, with advantage, receive valuable technical assistance.

I will like to invite *Dr. Keenleyside's* attention to a new aspect of the problem of technical assistance in public administration. The UNTAA can do a fine job to help those underdeveloped countries which do not have a properly organised system of administration. But what about others like ours who do have a well-organised administrative system? The problem in the latter is quite different—it is one of toning up of the administration, of improving the speed and quality of service. I do not think any kind of technological assistance is going to produce lasting results in this regard, as *Dr. Keenleyside* himself just stated with reference to Bolivia. You may pour in any number of engineers, any number of geologists, metallurgists or other similar experts, they will not by themselves be able to deliver the goods, because the need for really competent "organisers" is of no less importance in these countries. I do not know whether the U.N. has given serious thought to this matter. This is the problem which we actually discussed in Autumn 1956 with some of those gentlemen who came to India in connection with the 9th annual Conference of the UNESCO. The problem calls for a scheme for training of higher civil servants—a training which will not only improve their knowledge of administrative practices and techniques but also widen their

administrative insight upon which depends eventually the success of all administrative projects.

I must now thank *Dr. Keenleyside* warmly for having come down here and given us this very interesting talk which, I may assure him, is bound to act as a great stimulant to our thinking on the subject.

Prof. V.K.N. Menon (Director) :

On behalf of the Institute, I thank *Dr. Keenleyside* for having addressed us this evening at very short notice despite his many important engagements during his present, brief visit to Delhi. The subject of his talk is of special interest to us in this *Institute* in view of the assistance we need from all quarters to push ahead with our programme of activities. We hope soon to have with us Visiting Professors from abroad in connection with our schemes of training and research. The School of Public Administration, which we propose to set up shortly, may also in due course receive scholars and fellows from other countries and eventually even develop into a regional training centre.

I also wish to thank *Shri Mazumdar* for having presided over the meeting.